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ABSTRACT

The hypothesis that value orientation is a more important determinant of fertility behavior than social class was examined in this study. Data were obtained from 4 rural high schools in Lawrence County, Ohio. The sample consisted of 500 Protestant, white single students. Dependent variables were youth attitudes toward abortion and Ohio's abortion law. Independent variables were value orientations and social class. It was found that youths with modern value orientations had more liberal attitudes toward abortion, that youths from a high socioeconomic status expressed more liberal attitudes than youths from a low socioeconomic status, and that value orientations affect attitudes toward abortion apart from socioeconomic status. The major conclusion was that there existed a significant and positive correlation between modern value orientation and attitudes of rural youth toward abortion and Ohio's abortion law. (PS)

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MODERN VALUE ORIENTATIONS AND ATTITUDES OF SOUTHERN OHIO'S RURAL YOUTHS TOWARD ABORTION AND OHIO'S LAW CONCERNING ABORTION

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MODERN VALUE ORIENTATIONS AND ATTITUDES OF SOUTHERN OHIO'S RURAL YOUTHS TOWARD ABORTION AND OHIO'S LAW CONCERNING ABORTION.

In Indianapolis study, Kiser and Whelpton (1953: 95-110) found that it is not socioeconomic status per se but rather the underlying attitudes and psychological characteristics of these classes that account for fertility behavior. The general theoretical relationship between socioeconomic status and fertility was derived from the association of high status with low fertility norms and a high degree of rationality in family planning and of low status with the opposite characteristics (Freedman, Whelpton and Campbell, 1959: 100-102). The GAF studies as well as the Princeton studies found that religious affiliation is a better predictor of fertility than social class (Whelpton, Campbell, and Patterson, 1966; Westoff, Potter, Sagi, and Mishler, 1961; and Westoff, Potter and Sagi, 1963).

The 1965 GAF study discovered a significant association between region, size and place of residence and attitudes of women toward abortion (Westoff, Moore and Ryder, 1969: 12-13). Women who lived in or near the most populated areas were most favorable toward abortion, and those who resided in small towns or rural areas were least favorable. Education exerted the strongest influence on their attitudes toward abortion. All sub-groups, with the exception of women who were white Catholic, exhibited more liberal attitudes toward abortion with increasing educational attain-

ment. Furthermore, there was a significant relationship between attitudes toward abortion and husband's income and occupational status for both white non-catholic and non-white women.

Finner and Gamache, in a study of 122 residents of a New England community, showed a significant association between a multidimensional measure of religiosity and attitudes toward abortion (1969: 1-12). Their measure of religiosity focused on five dimensions: (i) ritualistic, (ii) ideological, (iii) intellectual, (iv) experiential, and (v) consequential. Ross's findings also supported the hypothesis that church attendance was negatively related to the attitudes toward abortion.

Clifford explored the relationship between women's modern and traditional value orientations and their fertility behavior (1971: 39-40). His sample consisted of 240 white, Protestant, non-farm female residents of Lexington, Kentucky. The findings of his study rejected the hypothesis that value orientations were intervening variables between position in the social structure and fertility behavior. In addition, data indicated that socio-economic status was more of a determinant of fertility behavior than value orientations. Clifford's value orientation scale consisted of individual's orientation in the realm of relations, nature, sex, time, and activity. His findings seem to contradict assumptions presented by Kiser and Whelpton in Indianapolis study (1953: 95-110). In the present investigation, we hypothesized that value orientation is more important determinant of fertility behavior than social class. More

specifically, modern value orientation is positively associated with liberal attitudes toward abortion and Ohio's law concerning abortion.

Sources of Data

Data were obtained from four rural high schools in Lawrence County, the Southern-most county in Ohio. This county is located on the Ohio River and is favored with abundant natural resources such as coal, limestone, dolomite, and clays. In 1970, the total population of Lawrence County was 56,868. The urban areas represent 51.4 per cent whereas rural areas compose the remaining 48.6 per cent of the county's population. The present investigation was confined to the analysis of data on 500 Protestant, white, single, students representing rural high schools of Lawrence County.

Measurement of Dependent and Independent Variables

The dependent variables of the present investigation were: (i) attitudes of youths toward abortion; and (ii) attitudes of youths toward Ohio's law concerning abortion. A likert scale of nine items was used to measure the attitudes of youths toward abortion. Six of these items described circumstances surrounding a pregnancy. Youths were asked to indicate how they felt about each reason why a woman might have an abortion. The last three items were general questions concerned with youth's attitudes toward abortion. The youths' responses were scored by means of a five point rating scale: (i) strongly agree, (ii) agree, (iii) undecided, (iv) disagree, and (v) strongly disagree. The minimum possible score was 9 and the maximum possible score was 45. The

scale was trichomized on the basis of frequency distributions of the scores by computing 33 and 66 percentiles. The scores ranging from 9 to 20 were classified liberal; from 21 to 28, moderate; and from 29 to 45, conservative.

The attitudes of youth toward Ohio's law concerning abortion was measured on the basis of the following question: "The state of Ohio permits abortion only when the health of the Mother is endangered by the pregnancy. Then, three doctors must approve the abortion. Do you feel that this law should be liberalized?" Responses to this question were placed along a liberal-conservative continuum. Youths who felt that law should be liberalized were classified liberals; those undecided, moderate; those against law reforms, conservative.

The value orientations and social class were independent variables in this study. The modern and traditional value orientations were determined by fourteen statements measuring five problem areas common to all human groups; namely, relational, nature, sex, time, and activity (Clifford, 1971: 39-40). The respondents answered each item by selecting either: "agree strongly","agree somewhat", "undecided", "disagree somewhat", "disagree strongly". A score of one was assigned to "agree strongly" and a score of five to "disagree strongly". Scores for each respondent were summed and 33 and 66 percentiles were computed on the basis of frequency distributions. The minimum possible score was 14 and the maximum possible score was 70. Youths with scores from 14 to 30 revealed modern value orientations; those in the 31 to 36 range had

intermediate value orientations; and those with scores from 37 to 70 exhibited traditional value orientations.

Socioeconomic status of the respondents was measured on the basis of Hollingshead's two-factor index of social position (Bonjean, Hill, and McLamore, 1967: 382-88). According to Hollingshead's index, respondents were grouped into five classes. The respondents from Class I were omitted due to small cell frequencies. Classes II and III were combined whereas Classes IV and V were treated separately.

RESULTS

Modern and Traditional Value Orientations

Table 1 shows that youths with modern value orientations have more liberal attitudes toward abortion (46 per cent) than youths with traditional value orientations (20 per cent). This association was significant at the .01 level. There is a significant association between youth's attitudes toward Ohio's law concerning abortion and modern and traditional value orientations. This result was significant at the .01 level. Sixty-five percent of youth with modern value orientations had liberal attitudes toward Ohio's abortion law, and only 45 per cent of youth with traditional value orientations had liberal attitudes toward the law (Table 2).

Table 1

Number and Percentage of Youth's Attitudes Toward Abortion by Modern and Traditional Value Orientations

	Attitudes toward Abortion						
	Liberal		Moderate		Conservative		Total
Value Orientations	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Modern	79	46	60	35	34	19	173
Intermediate	52	33	60	38	47	29	159
Traditional	34	20	61	36	73	44	168
Total	165		181		154		500

$x^2 = 32.66$, significant at .01 level, with 4 degrees of freedom

Table 2

Number and Percentage of Youth's Attitudes toward Ohio's Law Concerning Abortion by Modern and Traditional Value Orientations

	Attitudes toward Ohio's Law Concerning Abortion						
	Liberal		Moderate		Conservative		Total
Value Orientations	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Modern	113	65	30	17	30	17	173
Intermediate	96	60	27	17	36	23	159
Traditional	76	45	38	23	54	32	168
Total	285		95		120		500

$x^2 = 16.16$, significant at .01 level, with 4 degrees of freedom.

Socioeconomic Status

Youth from high socioeconomic status expressed more liberal attitudes toward abortion than youth from low socioeconomic status (Table 3). Forty-four per cent of the youth from Classes II and III had liberal attitudes toward abortion, while 25 per cent of the youth from Class V had liberal attitudes toward abortion. This finding was significant at the .05 level. A significant association was illustrated between youth's attitudes toward Ohio's law concerning abortion and socioeconomic status (Table 4). The relationship was significant at the .05 level. Youth from Classes II and III showed 66 per cent of youth in favor of law reform, while 16 per cent were against liberalization of Ohio's law. Class V exhibited only 46 per cent for law reform, while 33 per cent were against liberalization of Ohio's law. The hypotheses of significant relationships between attitudes toward abortion and Ohio's law concerning abortion and socioeconomic status are confirmed.

Socioeconomic Status and Modern and Traditional Value Orientations

Table 5 shows that when socioeconomic status is controlled, there remains a significant relationship between attitudes toward abortion and modern and traditional value orientations of Classes II and III. Findings were significant at the .05 level. Sixty-per cent of youth with modern value orientations had liberal attitudes toward abortion in Classes II and III, but only 22 per cent of youth with traditional value orientations in these classes exhibited liberal attitudes toward abortion.

Table 3

Number and Percentage of Youth's Attitudes

Toward Abortion

by Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic Status	Attitudes toward Abortion						
	Liberal		Moderate		Conservative		Total
Classes	N	%	N	%	N	%	
II and III	55	44	43	34	27	22	125
IV	75	31	92	38	77	31	244
V	29	25	40	34	47	41	116
Total	159		175		151		485

x^2 = 11.89, significant at .05 level, with 4 degrees of freedom.

Table 4

Number and Percentage of Youth's Attitudes

Toward Ohio's Law Concerning Abortion

by Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic Status	Attitudes toward Ohio's Law Concerning Abortion						
	Liberal		Moderate		Conservative		Total
Classes	N	%	N	%	N	%	
II and III	83	66	22	18	20	16	125
IV	140	58	45	18	59	24	244
V	54	46	24	21	38	33	116
Total	277		91		117		485

x^2 = 11.45, significant at .05 level, with 4 degrees of freedom.

Table 5

Number and Percentage of Youth's Attitudes toward Abortion by Modern and Traditional Value Orientations

Classes II and III

	Attitudes toward Abortion						
	Liberal		Moderate		Conservative		Total
Value Orientations	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Modern	31	60	13	25	8	15	52
Intermediate	17	37	18	39	11	24	46
Traditional	6	22	12	48	8	30	27
Total	54		43		27		125

$x^2 = 9.81$, significant at .05 level, with 4 degrees of freedom.

Class IV showed no association between youth's attitudes toward abortion and value orientations (Table 6). However, the findings are in the expected direction with 38 per cent of youth with modern value orientations showing liberal attitudes toward abortion, and 23 per cent of youth, with traditional value orientations exhibiting liberal attitudes toward abortion. Table 7 illustrates a significant association between attitudes toward abortion and modern and traditional value orientations of Class V. These findings were significant at the .05 level. Forty-five per cent of modern-oriented youth had liberal attitudes toward abortion. Only 15 per cent of tradition-oriented youth in this class had liberal attitudes toward abortion.

It can be inferred from these findings that value orientations affect attitudes toward abortion apart from socioeconomic status. The value orientations do not act as intervening variables. These findings refute Clifford's results that socioeconomic status is more closely related to fertility behavior than are value orientations (1971: 46-47). However, value orientation is a significant factor in predicting fertility behavior, and interpreting the relationship between socioeconomic status and fertility behavior.

Table 6

Number and Percentage of Youth's Attitudes toward Abortion by Modern and Traditional Value Orientations

Class IV

	Attitudes toward Abortion						
	Liberal		Moderate		Conservative		Total
Value Orientations	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Modern	32	38	35	41	18	21	85
Intermediate	25	32	27	36	25	32	77
Traditional	19	23	30	37	33	40	82
Total	76		92		76		244

x^2 = 8.21, non-significant at .05 level, with 4 degrees of freedom.

Table 7

Number and Percentage of Youth's Attitudes toward Abortion by Modern and Traditional Value Orientations

Class V

Value Orientations	Attitudes toward Abortion: Liberal N	Liberal %	Moderate N	Moderate %	Conservative N	Conservative %	Total
Modern	13	45	9	31	7	24	29
Intermediate	7	24	12	42	10	34	29
Traditional	9	15	19	33	30	52	58
Total	29		40		47		116

x^2 = 11.18, significant at .05 level, with 4 degrees of freedom.

CONCLUSIONS

The data from this study clearly show a significant and positive correlation between modern value orientation and attitudes of rural youths toward abortion and Ohio's law concerning abortion. Even after controlling for social class, value orientation is signficantly related to the attitudes toward abortion and Ohio's law concerning abortion. These findings suggest that value orientation is more important than social class in determining attitudes toward abortion and laws concerning abortion.

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